

VERNE LEWELLEN

By Bob Carroll

Verne Lewellen, legendary punter and all-around halfback, was one of the first stars of the Green Bay Packers. At the University of Nebraska, he captained the 1923 football team as an All-Conference halfback and was also an outstanding pitcher on the baseball team. The Pittsburgh Pirates were ready to sign him until a neck injury suffered in a train wreck affected his pitching arm. Jim Crowley, one of Notre Dame's "Four Horsemen" and a Green Bay native, recommended him to Packers coach Curly Lambeau.

Lewellen played nine years and 102 games for the Packers 1924-to-32 (in 1927 he was "lent" to the New York Yankees for three end-of-season games) and earned all-league first team honors from 1926-29. The 6'1", 180-pound halfback was a leading member of the Green Bay squad that won three straight NFL championships in 1929-30-31. In addition to his booming punts, slashing runs, and all-around offensive play, he was regarded as one of Green Bay's best defensive players.

Although official statistics were not kept during his career, reconstruction of all but two of his games from play-by-play accounts in newspapers show that he rushed 708 times for 2,410 yards and 37 touchdowns, modest figures by today's standards but outstanding for his time. His 83 pass receptions for 12 more TDs are also excellent for the period. And, although he was never the Packers' main passer, he nonetheless gained 2,076 yards via the air. His 307 points scored ranked him first among Packers for ten years after his retirement.

Oldtimers credit Lewellen with numerous 60 and 70-yard punts. George Calhoun, who covered the Packers for the Green Bay Press-Gazette during these years, described a 1929 kick at the Polo Grounds as the greatest he ever saw: with the line of scrimmage the Packers' 12-yard-line, Lewellen booted the ball out of bounds at the New York six. Reconstructed statistics show him with only a 39.5 average for 681 punts, but many of his kicks were of the "coffin corner" variety from inside the 40-yard-line, in keeping with the common strategy of the time.

While playing with the Packers, Lewellen passed the bar. In 1928, he ran successfully for Brown County district attorney against teammate Lavie Dilweg. Re-elected in 1930, he was swept out of office in the Democratic landslide of 1932. He continued his law practice after his retirement. In 1950, he rejoined the Packers as a member of the executive committee. He was general manager from 1954-60 and business manager from 1961-67.

VERNE C. LEWELLEN

Halfback-Tailback-Wingback-Blocking Back-Fullback

Born: 29 September 1901, Lincoln, NE

Died: 16 April 1980, Rockville, MD

Height: 6'1" Weight: 180 College: Nebraska

Year	Team	Lg	Gm	RUSHING				PASS RECEIVING			
				ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	PC	YDS	AVG	TD
1924	GB	N	8	52	121	2.3	2	3	43	14.3	0
1925	GB	N	10	73	211	2.9	1	9	144	16.0	3
1926	GB	N	13	83	275	3.3	3	21	299	14.2	3
1927	GB-NYY	N	13x	98	329	3.4	5	16	274	17.1	0
1928	GB	N	13	106	349	3.3	6	13	169	13.0	3
1929	GB	N	13	86	405	4.7	6	8	97	12.1	1
1930	GB	N	14y	119	411	3.5	8	10	173	17.3	1
1931	GB	N	7	43	177	4.1	6	1	14	14.0	0
1932	GB	N	14	48	132	2.8	0	2	27	13.5	1
9 years			105	708	2410	3.4	37	83	1240	14.9	12

x - 1 game incomplete; 10 games GB, 3 games NYY

y - 1 game incomplete

Year	Team	Lg	PUNTING		TOT		PASSING			
			NO	AVG	INT	PTS	ATT	COM	YDS	TD

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 12, No. 1 (1990)

1924	GB	N	-	-	0	12	8	4	74	0	0
1925	GB	N	91	35.4	0	25	26	7	69	0	4
1926	GB	N	116	40.6	9	42	27	11	156	0	5
1927	GB-NYY	N	103	38.8	3	30	36	15	233	1	6
1928	GB	N	136	41.1	4	54	87	29	402	1	10
1929	GB	N	85	41.9	2	48	56	21	501	4	5
1930	GB	N	89	40.5	1	54	71	28	497	3	8
1931	GB	N	26	39.5	2	36	10	3	34	0	1
1932	GB	N	35	33.9	1	6	14	4	110	0	5
9 years			681	39.5	22	307	335	122	2076	9	44

All-NFL SELECTIONS

- 1925 2nd - GreenBayPress-Gazette.
- 1926 1st - Green Bay Press-Gazette.
- 1927 1st - G.B. Press-Gaz., Wilfrid Smith(Chi.Tribune), Jack Reardon (official), LeRoy Andrews (coach).
- 1928 1st - G.B. Press-Gaz., NFL Managers, W. Smith.
- 1929 1st - G.B. Press-Gaz., Wilfrid Smith, Rud Rennie; 2nd - LeRoy Andrews.
- 1930 2nd - Chicago Daily Times, Milwaukee Sentinel.